

Message Text

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PAGE 01 CARACA 12328 211203Z

ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-07
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15
USIA-06 SY-05 EB-08 COME-00 OMB-01 TRSE-00 MCT-01
USSS-00 HA-05 /081 W
-----114911 211209Z /15

P 211120Z DEC 77

FM AMEMBASSY CARACAS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 449

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: ASEC, PINS, VE

SUBJECT: OWENS-ILLINOIS RESPONSE TO SALOM MESA'S
CHARGES OF A CIA CONNECTION AND ATTEMPTED
BRIBERY OF PRESIDENT PEREZ- NIEHOUS KIDNAPPING

REF: CARACAS 12241

1. DEPUTY SALOM MESA, ACCUSED OF COMPLICITY IN THE
KIDNAPPING OF AMERICAN BUSINESSMAN WILLIAM NIEHOUS,
STATED DURING THE OPENING OF HIS TRIAL DECEMBER 15
(SEE REFTEL) THAT NIEHOUS WAS A CIA AGENT AND THAT
HIS COMPANY, OWENS-ILLINOIS (O-I), HAD ATTEMPTED TO
BRIBE VENEZUELAN PRESIDENT CARLOS ANDRES PEREZ DURING
THE 1973 PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGN. HE ALSO DENIED HIS GUILT AND
SAID HE WAS THE VICTIM OF A VENDETTA ON THE PART OF PRESIDENT
PEREZ.

2. WHILE MAKING HIS DEFENSE STATEMENT BEFORE THE
MILITARY TRIBUNAL, MESA ALLEGED THAT NIEHOUS AND FIVE
OTHERS WERE CIA OPERATIVES. THE FIVE MEN WERE
IDENTIFIED AS CALVIN PHILLIPS (O-I GENERAL MANAGER IN
VENEZUELA), WILLIAM COLEMAN (O-I VICE PRESIDENT FOR
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THE WESTERN HEMISPHERE), TERENCE CANAVAN (NIEHOUS
FAMILY FRIEND), THOMAS HUGHES (O- ATTORNEY IN CARACAS),
AND HOWARD KEW (RONALD KEW, CANADIAN CITIZEN AND SALES
MANAGER OF O-I CARACAS). THE "EL NACIONAL" OF DECEMBER 16
QUOTES MESA AS HAVING SAID, "...IT IS CERTAIN THAT
HE (NIEHOUS) IS AN AGENT OF THE CIA WHO WORKED ACTIVELY
IN THE ELECTORAL CAMPAIGN OF 1973." "I HAVE BEEN

INFORMED THAT MR. NIEHOUS GAVE THE PRESENT PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC A CONSIDERABLE AMOUNT OF MONEY DURING HIS ELECTORAL CAMPAIGN SO THAT IF ELECTED HE WOULD REPAY OWENS-ILLINOIS AND MR. NIEHOUS WITH ECONOMIC ADVANTAGES FOR THAT COMPANY AND FOR THE TRANSACTIONALS REPRESENTED IN OUR COUNTRY BY PERSONS LIKE MR. NIEHOUS...."

3. POLCOUNS SPOKE CALVIN PHILLIPS OF O-I ON DECEMBER 19. PHILLIPS SAID THAT: A) MRS. NIEHOUS WILL BE INTERVIEWED TELEPHONICALLY BY A REPORTER FROM THE CARACAS DAILY "EL NACIONAL" ON DECEMBER 20. SHE PLANS TO DENY ALL THE CIA ALLEGATIONS AND APPEAL FOR PUBLIC ATTENTION TO BE DIRECTED TO THE FACT THAT HER HUSBAND IS STILL MISSING 22 MONTHS AFTER HIS ABDUCTION. B) WILLIAM COLEMAN OF O-I ISSUED A STATEMENT TO THE "TOLEDO BLADE" DENYING ALL OF MESA'S ALLEGATIONS IN RESPONSE TO A WIRE SERVICE STORY THAT WAS CARRIED BY THAT PAPER. C) COLEMAN WILL ALSO WRITE A LETTER DENYING MESA'S CHARGES TO INTERIOR MINISTER OCTAVIO LEPAGE.

4. VENEZUELAN REACTION TO MESA'S STATEMENTS HAS BEEN SUBDUED. THE GOV DID NOT COMMENT AND PRESS COVERAGE OF THE TRIAL HAS BEEN LIMITED TO BACK PAGE STORIES.

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: BRIBERY, PRESIDENT, KIDNAPPING
Control Number: n/a
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Sent Date: 21-Dec-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977CARACA12328
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
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From: CARACAS
Handling Restrictions: n/a
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Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t19771233/aaaabbdf.tel
Line Count: 94
Litigation Code IDs:
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Office: ACTION ARA
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 77 CARACAS 12241
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 16-Sep-2004 12:00:00 am
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 162106
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: OWENS-ILLINOIS RESPONSE TO SALOM MESA'S CHARGES OF A CIA CONNECTION AND ATTEMPTED BRIBERY OF PRESIDENT PEREZ- NIEHOUS KIDNAPPING
TAGS: ASEC, PINS, VE, (NIEHOUS, WILLIAM)
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/c23316ff-c188-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009